



**Committee on
Homeland Security Democrats**
Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member

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For Immediate Release:
November 16, 2005

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Committee Democrats Offer Legislation Giving Crucial Support Services to Border Patrol Officers

WASHINGTON--Democrats of the House Homeland Security Committee today offered legislation that would provide Border Patrol officers the personnel, equipment, and training they need to enforce our nation's immigration, customs, and other border security laws.

Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX) and Committee Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) introduced the legislation as an amendment to "The Border Security and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2005" (H.R. 4312) during the Committee's open markup.

The amendment authorizes the funding needed to hire the 2,000 Border Patrol agents called for in the 9/11 Act signed into law last December.

"Increasing the size of the Border Patrol and providing it with the equipment and resources that it needs to secure our nation's border is a top priority," said Rep. Jackson Lee. "In addition, we should also provide incentives to encourage informants to assist the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection in investigating and disrupting commercial alien smuggling."

The amendment also provides equipment enhancements that the Border Patrol Union has said its field personnel are in desperate need of in order to effectively carry out their mission. These enhancements include encrypted radios, handheld global positioning equipment, and night-vision equipment. Customs and Border Protection agents would also receive more training throughout their entire career, including foreign language training. Finally, the amendment also includes enhancements to the Department's compensation system in order to make the Border Patrol more attractive to recruits and to help ensure that the agency is able to retain its top performers.

"Roughly two-thirds of Border Patrol Agents state they do not have the tools, support, and training they need to stop potential terrorists and protect the country from terrorist threats," said Rep. Thompson. "The Governors of three of the four Southwestern Border States recently declared 'states of emergency' because they weren't getting enough federal help to secure the border. This should never happen. We must give our Border Patrol Agents, federal officials and states the tools they need to adequately secure our borders."

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